DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 588 SO 013 352

AUTHOR Weaver, David C.
TITLE Planning Education in College Geography Programs: The Problem of Development.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (Los Angeles, CA, April 19-22, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Planning; Curriculum Development; Educational Needs; *Educational Planning; *Geography Instruction; Guidelines; Higher Education; *Program Development

ABSTRACT

Guidelines are presented for developing and implementing planning-oriented geography curriculum and/or programs on the college level. The guidelines are based on three types of evidence: (1) published sources regarding the relationship between geography as an academic discipline and planning as a professional practice; (2) perceptions of professional planners as to the utility of geographic training in planning practice; and (3) recent developments in curriculum and staffing of geography departments throughout the United States regarding orientation toward planning education. Guidelines are presented in six categories. Category one suggests that a geography/planning curriculum should stress mapmaking, air-photo interpretation, land use analysis, quantitative techniques in spatial analysis, and environmental assessment. Category two explains how professional handling of administration and interdisciplinary relationships can enhance a program's chances for success. Category three suggests that faculty and staff should have a balanced background of academic work and professional planning experience. Category four stresses the need to involve professional planners in teaching, research projects, advising, and curriculum development. Category five emphasizes that the placement of graduates should be of primary importance to educators. Ways in which faculty can aid students include advising students regarding courses appropriate to planning and exposing students to planning employers through internships or research projects. The final category discusses the need to publicize a geography/planning program for the benefit of potential students and potential employers. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

DAVID C. WEAVER

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED201588

Planning Education in College Geography Programs: The Problem of Development

David C. Weaver
The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa

SO 013 352

Introduction

The establishment of viable geography/planning degree programs has been a primary concern of the author for the past nine years. During that time he has been heavily involved in the nurturing of three separate academic programs specifically oriented to community planning practice. Two of these experiences (one at West Georgia College and the other at The University of Alabama) related to the creation of special "planning tracks" or concentrations for the B.S. degree in geography. The third has involved the direction and development of an interdisciplinary program offering a B.A., a B.S. or a Certificate in Regional and Urban Planning (at The University of Alabama). In this program, geography shares the curriculum with Sociology, Economics and Political Science.

During the development of these programs the author has frequently found himself in the position of having to justify their form, function, and potential student subscription, to a variety of levels of academic administration. This repeated demand for justification led to attempts to secure supporting documentation for such arguments. The documentation was derived by

a) studying published sources on the relationship between geography as an academic discipline and planning as a professional practice.[1]

b) determining the perceptions of professional planners as to the utility of geographic training in planning practice. The determination was made from published sources and through the Regional and Urban Planning Advisory Board at The University of Alabama.[2] The latter is a group of non-academic professional planners appointed to assist in academic program improvement.

c) assessing recent developments occurring in the curriculum and staffing of geography departments in the United States in terms of orientation

towards planning education. Such information was derived from published sources and by personal communications with program personnel in selected geography programs.[3]

Based on evidence derived from all of these avenues of enquiry, and from the personal experiences acquired in actual program development, a specific operating philosophy has been developed towards geography/planning program development at The University of Alabama. This philosophy can be expressed in the form of six categories of guidelines or recommendations for viable planning oriented geography curriculum development. These are 1) Curriculum; 2) Administrative structures and interdisciplinary relationships; 3) Faculty and staff qualifications; 4) Involvement of practicing professional planners; 5) Student placement; 6) Marketing the program.

Curriculum

Continued development of the geography/planning emphasis will be dependent on the market place. It would be difficult to find a more transitional and turbulent market for geography graduates than planning.[4] Demand is generated largely by governmental programming, particularly at the federal level. With less federal aid, the demand for the general city planner has leveled off. The training of planners has shifted toward increased specialization and the development of new forms of urban management education concerned with policy development.

If geography is to relate to the changing planning market, it must be sure of its identity and confident of its role. The planning market is characterized by a complex set of social issues involving both the natural and manmade environments. Addressing these issues requires input from a full range of professional, technical and scientific fields. To accept the pose

adopted by some geographers that geography is planning is not only simplistic and presumptuous, it is arrogant and an insult to both the planning profession and the contributions of other disciplines.

The combination of specialized skills identified by planners as necessary for the changing job market requires the best of many areas, including: 1) social research design and statistical analysis; 2) large-scale project management; 3) financial planning and program budgeting, especially in high-level staff positions; 4) environmental programming; 5) regional resource inventory, most evident in state land use planning; 6) real estate and land development; 7) administrative law and contract negotiations--for example, in contracting public services with private management firms; 8) public finance and capital improvement programming; 9) photo interpretation and graphic display techniques; 10) information systems design; 11) cost-benefit/cost effectiveness analysis; 12) input-output analysis; 13) urban growth strategies and large scale simulation modelling; 14) environmental impact analysis, transportation and economic development, particularly in regional planning.[5]

Clearly, some of these areas lie squarely in geography's domain (e.g., 4, 5, 9, 14), while others most assuredly do not. Geography departments developing a planning posture should focus their efforts on those areas perceived by planners to be appropriate to the discipline. They should avoid those areas where geographic legitimacy is lacking. Building to traditional strengths in applied geography is likely to gain a geography program greater credibility than attempting to institute courses more appropriate to other disciplines.

A geography program oriented toward planning should provide concentrations in those topical areas of geography recognized as academic strengths by planners: 1) Mapmaking; 2) Air-photo Interpretation; 3) Land Use Analysis;

4) Quantitative Techniques in Spatial Analysis; 5) Environmental Assessment. Geography programs gaining the greatest acceptance and credence by planners will be those programs emphasizing such topics. A combination of these topics should logically provide the core curriculum of any geography program oriented toward planning.[6]

The course structure and degree requirements of the single discipline planning program should reflect both the designated topical focus of the program and the particular segment of the planning market which that focus is intended to serve.[7] While it may be feasible for a geography department to gain planning recognition for a program emphasizing only one training element (e.g., mapmaking or air photo interpretation), the dimensions of the market in planning for such program graduates will be significantly restricted.

A desirable course mix should include the following: 1) Traditional cartography; 2) Computer cartography; 3) Air-photo interpretation; 4) Remote sensing; 5) Land use analysis; 6) Retail location; 7) Industrial location; 8) Network analysis; 9) Quantitative techniques; 10) Terrain analysis; 11) Field techniques for data gathering; 12) Earth Science, including biogeography, hydrology, climatology, geology, physiography, pedology and ecology.

The course mix established for such a curriculum should be supplemented by carefully selected required or optional support courses in non-geographic areas. This selection should reflect two primary considerations; a.) the non-geography courses should be related to the geography courses in the core curriculum, and b.) the non-geography courses should be related to the practice of community planning. In a 1979 survey of 48 planning agencies in the southeast by R. Grasser of the Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission the course work favored most for undergraduate planners included: a.) data research and analysis; b.) statistics; c.) planning theory; d.) public

administration with emphasis on government fiscal procedures; e.) grantsmanship; and f.) communication skills.[8]

A geography department considering program restructuring should concentrate efforts at the undergraduate levels. The primary qualification for professional planning practice has traditionally been a Master's degree in city, urban, or regional planning. As a result the number of Master's programs in planning has proliferated and competition both for students and in the job market is most intense at this educational level. By comparison the production of undergraduates with planning specializations has perhaps occurred at a rate below that of marketability. This may be increasingly true during the decade of the 1980's as governments facing high inflation, and an inadequate funding find that they cannot support the same proportion of graduate planners as during the 1960's and 1970's.[9]

A recent survey conducted by the Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission showed that planning agencies in a four-state area (Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Mississippi) were holding the line on staff salaries by hiring more undergraduates as starting planners.[10]

Geography Master's level programs are less likely to be successful. They have less credibility among planners and would have greater difficulty placing students.

Administrative Structures and Interdisciplinary Relationships

The advantages of authoritative direction and control must be considered early in the promotion of non-traditional planning education programs, and whenever feasible management of the program should be vested in a single academic department. Tight administrative control over program content, quality of faculty, professional involvement and marketing is recommended. Administrative

structure and interdisciplinary relationships play kep roles in the development and operation of most academic programs. It is particularly true in planning education where the primary subject matter has a natural interdisciplinary focus. Administrative responsibility is one of the main issues identified by Geography Department Chairmen as determining the success of planning-oriented geography programs. Those geography departments with primary responsibility for the administration of planning curriculum indicate substantially greater satisfaction with their acceptance and credibility, than those departments involved in loosely organized interdisciplinary programs with somewhat diffuse or remote administrative arrangements. The dangers for administration in the commonly loose affiliations of interdisciplinary programs is that policy determination becomes more difficult, faculty responsibilities may be more poorly defined, budgetary commitments may be less reliable and academic quality is less easily policed.

Faculty and Staff Qualifications

A geography department involved in planning should attempt to hire faculty members who have: a.) a master's degree from an academic program approved by the American Planning Association; b.) several years of employment as a practicing planner; and c.) membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners. Trained geographers are unlikely to have graduated from an academic program approved by APA. However, many have completed graduate school programs with a planning emphasis. A number of geographers have full-time work experience with planning agencies. A larger number have worked as consultants in community development situations. The degree to which a prospective faculty member has provided professional advice or conducted research in a planning context is a vital consideration in the development of a geography/planning

program. Membership in AICP is not an unreasonable requirement for Geography departments to make. This is particularly the case for departments interested in eventual APA approval.

Involvement of Professional Planners

A planning oriented geography program should: 1) Involve professional planners in the instruction of courses either as course lecturers or guest lecturers where they have appropriate expertise. 2) Develop field trips to planning agencies where the professional planners lead the discussion. 3) Allow professional planners to supervise research projects or internship experiences. 4) Allow professional planners to function as either official or unofficial advisors on curriculum development in academic programs.

All of these options may not be suitable for incorporation in all programs, but the adoption of one or more of these procedures will generally enhance the stature of an academic program among the professional planning fraternity.

As previously emphasized the acceptance and approval of a planning-oriented academic program by professional planners is essential to the program's ultimate success. The acceptance of an academic program by the professional planner is likely to be fostered if the planner can see actual involvement of professional planners in the academic program.

Student Placement

The placement of graduates should be a major concern of academic programs oriented toward career training. Student placement can be facilitated in the following ways: 1) Indicating adequate course experience on the transcript; 2) Advising and counseling students with respect to course subscription

appropriate to planning; 3) Marketing a quality curriculum to professional planners (see below); 4) Educating the College Placement Office of capabilities of program graduates; 5) Acquiring and making available job announcements to program participants; 6) Exposing students to planning employers through internships or research projects.[11]

The last point can be particularly significant because potential employers can obtain first-hand experience on a trial basis of the personal and professional attributes of the student.

Marketing

A publicity program on the geography/planning curriculum should be developed and addressed directly to potential students and potential employers of graduates.[12] Positive public exposure of the geography planning program is likely to accrue benefits. Some of the readily available techniques for promoting a planning program have already been treated. Among them are the involvement of professionals in the curriculum and the exposure of students and employers through internship schemes. Other techniques include research and service contracts between the academic programs and planning agencies, liaison with professional planning organizations (e.g., APA) and news media publicity. Frequently it is advantageous to publicize the role of the program on campus as well as off-campus.

Planning oriented geography programs should gain approval by the American Planning Association. APA has been operating a certification scheme for planning education programs for some time. The basic criteria for certification are curriculum content and faculty size and qualifications. Single discipline programs can qualify for APA approval. APA recognition removes a great deal of

the burden of proof when a planning education program is attempting to sell its product. Information relating to both program and faculty certification can be obtained from the American Planning Association, 1313 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

References

1. For example Brian J.L. Berry, "More on Relevance and Policy Analysis", Area, 4, (1972), pp. 77-80; David E. Christensen, "Geography and Planning: Some Perspectives", The Professional Geographer, 29, (1977), pp. 148-152; J.T. Coppock, "Geography and Public Policy: Challenges, Opportunity and Implications", in J.T. Coppock and W.R.D. Sewell (eds.), Spatial Dimensions of Public Policy, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1976); W.F. Lever, "Geography and Planning", in Jean Forbes (ed.), Studies in Social Science and Planning, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p. 58; Harold M. Mayer, "Urban Geography and Urban Planning: A Report on a Symposium", Geographical Survey, 4, (1978), pp. 26-31; D. Thomas, "Geography and Physical Planning", in R.U. Cooke and J.H. Johnson, Trends in Geography, (London: Pergamon, 1969); E.C. Willatts, "Planning and Geography in the Last Three Decades", Geographical Journal, 137, 1971, pp. 311-338.

2. Daniel P. Beard, "Professional Problems of Non-Academic Geographers", The Professional Geographer, 28, (1976), pp. 127-31; Robert A. Beauregard, "The Occupation of Planning", Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 42, (1976), pp. 187-192; P.F. Mattingly, "On the Value of Geography in Planning Practice", The Professional Geographer, Vol. 26, 1974, pp. 310-314.

3. J.R. Schwendeman, Jr. (Ed.) Directory of College Geography of the United States (Geographical Studies and Research Center, Eastern Kentucky, University, Richmond, KY), Annual 1951-78. J.D. Harrison and R.D. Larsen. Survey - Results: Planning in Geography, off print of summary information from mail questionnaire distributed in May 1975, supplied by the authors.

4. D.R. Godschalk (Ed.) Planning in America: Learning from Turbulence, (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Planners, 1974).

5. H.S. Perloff, Education for Planning: City, State and Regional, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957).

6. James D. Harrison and Robert A. Larsen, "Geography and Planning: The Need for an Applied Interface", The Professional Geographer, 29, (1977), pp. 139-147; Phillip R. Pryde, "An Alternative Approach to the Applied Geography Interface", The Professional Geographer, 30, (1978), pp. 1-2.

7. D.R. Diamond and J.B. McLoughlin (Eds.) Education for Planning, Vol. 1, New York: Pergamon Press, 1973, p. 26.

8. R. Grasser, Personal Letter to the author, November 20, 1979.

9. American Institute of Planners, "AIP Membership Has Not Changed Much Since 1965: Average Age About the Same but Salaries and Education Higher", AIP Newsletter, 9, (1974), pp. 1-4.

10. R. Grasser, op. cit.

11. Barry M. Moriarty, "Making Employers Aware of the Job Skills of Geographers: A Promotional Program", The Professional Geographer, 30, (1978), pp. 315-318.

12. Robert A. Beauregard, "Geographers and Planners in the Non-Academic Labor Market: Lessons for Environmental Occupations", Intersections, 10, (1981), pp. 18-23; Thomas J. Wilbanks and Michael Libbee, "Avoiding the Demise of Geography in the United States", The Professional Geographer, 31, (1979), pp. 1-7.